UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Blue Lake Rancheria Water Resources Development Project

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In accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval and associated funding to construct a combination community/irrigation well for the Blue Lake Rancheria (BLR) is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by Reclamation's Final Environmental Assessment (EA), *Blue Lake Rancheria Water Resources Development Project*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

Under the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991, as amended (Drought Act), and other authorities, Reclamation is planning to use \$40 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to fund emergency drought relief projects that can quickly and effectively mitigate the consequences that have resulted from current and future drought conditions in California.

2009 was the third consecutive year of drought conditions in the State of California. Governor Schwarzenegger declared a drought emergency for the entire state. The BLR Tribe is suffering from the prolonged drought and experiencing severe effects to the health and safety of tribal members. In compliance with Section 104 of the Drought Act, the BLR has declared a drought emergency and requested Reclamation's assistance for the purpose of installing a combination community/irrigation well to provide a dependable source of water on the BLR for future use as irrigation for a green belt to reduce fire risk to Tribal Housing units as well as provide a potable water source for the proposed campground/RV park and existing and planned future housing on the BLR.

The BLR is a federally recognized, Sovereign Indian nation comprised of 77 acres located adjacent to the small town of Blue Lake in Humboldt County, California. Humboldt County is a rural county in Northern California located 225 miles north of San Francisco. Under normal weather conditions the area has moderate temperatures and considerable precipitation. According to the California Drought Update dated July 31, 2009, the last three years have been abnormally dry weather conditions. The recent dry conditions have resulted in the BLR's need for an alternative dependable water source.

The Proposed Action would supply water to a 40-acre area on the BLR. The proposed project area was originally a mobile home park consisting of older model mobile homes (17 acres) and fallow grassland used for horse pasture rental (23 acres) in the dormant area of the site which is now wild land. The 23-acre fallowed pasture area of the Proposed Action area is encompassed by overgrown vegetation that is dry most of the year due to current and previous drought conditions and therefore has been designated a high severity fire risk by the County of Humboldt. One way to reduce fire risk and possible losses of Tribal Housing on the BLR is to obtain an adequate

dependable water source. A dependable source of water would maintain the green belt status and help to keep fire risk to a minimum. In addition from the benefits of fire prevention, the Tribe is in need of a clean potable water source for the proposed campground/RV park as well as existing and planned future housing on the BLR.

FINDINGS

Reclamation has prepared an EA which analyzes the impacts of the Proposed Action. Based on the analysis in the EA, Reclamation has found that the construction of a combination community/irrigation well for the BLR would not result in significant impacts to the environment and does not require the preparation of an EIS. This Finding of No Significant Impact is based upon the following:

- 1. <u>Surface Water Resources</u> The Proposed Action would include drilling the well to a depth that would not result in surface water influence and therefore would not increase or decrease surface water use. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to surface water or the resources dependent on surface water.
- 2. <u>Groundwater Resources</u> The limited amount of groundwater (40 gallons per minute) that would be utilized by the Proposed Action would not result in measurable fluctuations in groundwater levels or exceed the daily amount that would result in overdraft of the Dows Prairie Groundwater Subbasin. Well standards developed by the California Department of Water Resources would be incorporated to protect the integrity of California's groundwater. In addition, the five groundwater monitoring wells in close proximity to the Proposed Action area would show any measureable fluctuation in groundwater levels potentially caused by the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to groundwater resources in the Dows Prairie Groundwater Subbasin.
- 3. <u>Geology and Soils</u> —Slopes in the Proposed Action area are zero to two percent and do not pose an erosion problem though erosion control measures would be in place during the trenching process associated with the construction of the pipe and power line distribution systems to avoid any impacts to resources in the surrounding area. In addition the area that would be disturbed during installation of distribution systems would be temporary and returned to the existing conditions following the completion of construction activities. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to geology or soils.
- 4. <u>Land Use</u> The potential future Tribal housing and RV Park would be constructed on previously disturbed land which would not impact current land use and would also concentrate growth and keep the developed area of the BLR limited. In addition, the Proposed Action would aid in reducing fire risk by sustaining a green belt within the BLR which would provide beneficial effects to the BLR residences as well as the

surrounding area. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to land use in the proposed project area.

- 5. <u>Biological Resources</u> The Proposed Action would not include activities located within, or in close proximity to, waters of the U.S. or their associated riparian habitat and therefore, the Proposed Action would not impact federally listed fish species that have the potential to occur in the Mad River and Powers Creek. The construction activities would be short in duration and the area that would be disturbed during installation of distribution systems would be temporary and returned to the existing conditions following the completion of construction activities. The proposed combination community/irrigation well would be located on previously disturbed land and would not disturb associated habitat utalized for foraging or nesting activities and therefore would not impact bird species. The Proposed Action would not result in short-term or long-term significant impacts to biological resources in the project area or surrounding area. In addition, due to the Proposed Action area being previously disturbed, no wilderness designations or unique ecosystem, biological community or its inhabitants are expected to be impacted by the project.
- 6. <u>Cultural Resources</u> The Proposed Action is the type of activity that has the potential to affect historic properties. A cultural resources survey and Tribal consultation did not identify any historic properties within the project area. Since no historic properties will be affected, no cultural resources will be impacted as a result of implementing Proposed Action.
- 7. <u>Indian Trust Assets</u> The nearest ITA is the BLR and therefore, the Proposed action would not significantly impact ITAs.
- 8. <u>Environmental Justice</u> The Proposed Action would not disproportionately affect minorities or low-income populations and communities. The Proposed Action would benefit the tribe, a minority population. There would not be significant impacts to human health or environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action.
- 9. <u>Global Climate Change</u> The Proposed Action would not include any significant change on the composition of the atmosphere and therefore would not result in significant impacts to climate change.
- 10. <u>Cumulative Impacts</u> The Proposed Action would not result in significant cumulative impacts to surface water resources, groundwater resources, geology and soils, land use, biological resources, cultural resources, ITAs, environmental justice, or global climate change.